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HEALTHNET NEWS

A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services

Volume XVI Number 1

Spring 2001

UPDATE

THE INVITATION IS STILL OPEN

Interested in presenting a program at your library on searching for health information on the Internet? Healthnet staff is available to help you. We can tailor a program to suit your needs – whether it's a program for librarians or members of the community. We can offer a program on a specific aspect of health or medicine, describe the fundamentals of evaluating Internet resources, or include anything else you feel is important for your particular library. We'll even design a news release and a flyer to publicize the program.

Healthnet recently offered a program for community members in conjunction with the Darien Library. We will be offering programs this fall at the Farmington Library, Hall Memorial Library in Ellington, Fairfield Public Library, Essex Library, and Goshen Library.

Call soon to schedule a date – 860/679-4055; email: richetelle@nso.uchc.edu

UPCOMING MEDICAL REFERENCE WORKSHOP

We've scheduled a Medical Reference Tools and Techniques workshop for Wednesday, September 5th at the Wallingford Public Library. This will be a program for anyone who staffs the reference desk at a public library. A flyer with more details will be sent out at the end of July. For more information, contact Alberta at 860/679-4055; email: richetelle@nso.uchc.edu

PROFESSIONAL READING

GOOD READING FOR GOOD EATING

The supplement to the May 1, 2001 edition of **Library Journal** has a resource guide on nutrition books, periodicals, videos, CD-ROMs, web sites, and associations. nutrition titles, popular diets, nutrition for children vitamins and supplements, cookbooks, and Each entry, including those for periodicals and the unique features of the resource.



The list of books has 7 categories including general and adolescents, special nutrition needs for women, emotional/psychosocial aspects of nutrition and diet. other formats, has a brief annotation that outlines the

For Connecticut residents and others with access to Gale's Expanded Academic Index ASAP and General Reference Center Gold - - You can download the full-text of this LJ article from Expanded Academic Index ASAP and General Reference Center Gold (2 iConn databases). To access the article, just type in the title of the article in the search box [A balanced diet of nutrition resources] and then hit the search button. This can be done as either a keyword search or a subject search.

Another interesting article in the LJ supplement is a list of the 24 "best" (according to one reviewer) consumer health books for the year 2000. Titles deal with topics including cancer, alternative therapies, women's health, breast cancer, health services for seniors, and organ transplant, to name just a few. Barbara Bibel, a regular consumer health reviewer for Library Journal, compiled the list. For a book to be selected for the list, it had to be well written and easy to understand, fill a real need, and address a topic that has not received extensive coverage in lay publications. The book also had to have been written by respected authorities on the disease, condition, or topic in question. Unfortunately, this list is not available in the iConn databases mentioned above.



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<http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet>

Still another article worth noting in the supplement is "Consumer health information on the net", written by Marylaine Block. Her intent in this article is to describe the librarian's role in helping people find accurate, authoritative health information on the Internet. The skills librarians need to help library users find quality health information on the Internet are no different than the skills employed in collection development and effective reference work.

Block offers suggestions on how librarians can teach information searching skills to library users. She emphasizes the importance of knowing the source of the information and advises that Internet sites must state clearly the information they provide is complementary to, not a substitute for, information the person receives from his or her physician. Another point she stresses when helping someone find medical information in print or on the 'Net is the importance of knowing who the user is (a medical student, newly diagnosed patient, husband/wife of the person with the illness or condition, etc.). She believes that without this knowledge, it will be difficult to provide effective guidance to help the person find the appropriate information (a point stressed in Healthnet's medical reference workshops)..

For Connecticut residents only and others with access to Gale's Expanded Academic Index ASAP and General Reference Center Gold - - You can download the full-text of this LJ article from Expanded Academic Index ASAP and General Reference Center Gold (2 iConn databases listed under "Resources for the Public"). To access the article, just type in the title of the article in the search box [Consumer health information on the Net] and then hit the search button. This can be done as either a keyword search or a subject search.

Bibel B. Best consumer health books 2000. **Library Journal** 2001 May 1 (supplement);126(8): 18-20.

Block M. Consumer health information on the Net. **Library Journal** 2001 May 1 (supplement); 126(8): 21-24.

Tomlin AC. A balanced diet of nutrition resources. **Library Journal** 2001 May 1 (supplement);126(8):5-16.

LOOKING FOR BOOK REVIEWS?

I don't know about you, but the more I use the Gale iConn databases, the more impressed I am about the breadth of coverage and the availability of full-text. One of the features I like best is the ability to search for health and medical book reviews in several of the databases, in particular Expanded Academic Index ASAP and General Reference Center Gold.

To find book reviews that have appeared, for instance, in *Library Journal* or *Booklist*, simply type in the topic of interest, select the name or names of the journals you want searched, and hit the "Search" key. For instance, if you're looking in General Reference Center Gold for reviews of titles dealing with epilepsy, simply type in the word "epilepsy" in the search box, then scroll a little way down and limit the search to the periodicals in which you want to search. Select "Submit selections" from the left-hand menu bar which will return you to the search page, then hit the "Search" key. In this case, there are 14 reviews listed for books on epilepsy in the General Reference Center Gold database and 13 reviews in Expanded Academic Index ASAP. A word of caution - some reviews are old and the titles may be out of print.

Book review searches work best when you select the periodicals in which you want to search. *Library Journal* and *Booklist* are two obvious choices, but you could also add *School Library Journal* to the search list.

YOUR PRIVACY – WHAT IS IT WORTH?

Has a web site discovered personal information about you as you were searching for health information? Yes, it's possible that this happened without your knowledge and consent. Many users blithely surf the Internet looking for health information and leave footprints wherever they've been and how long they've been there. Ever fill out a health questionnaire on the Internet, for instance, to calculate a recommended low calorie diet to help you lose weight? The information you entered may have been shared with individuals, organizations, and private companies to target you for email ads for weight loss products.



Healthnet co-sponsored a program on health privacy on the Internet at the annual Connecticut Library Association conference in April. Featured speakers included Charles Inlander, president and founder of the People's Medical Society, the largest consumer health advocacy organization in the United States. Attorney Zita Lazzarini, who teaches law and bioethics at the University of Connecticut Health Center and Nancy Metcalf, the medical editor for *Consumer Reports* magazine also spoke.

Attorney Lazzarini warned listeners that "... the Internet gives the illusion of anonymity..." when, in fact, there is a constant process of collection and using information about people who visit web sites. Nancy Metcalf elaborated on this by describing her experiences when she visited different web sites. Telemarketers, she said, can "...plunder the treasure trove of personal health information that is available on the Internet..." and target their advertisements based on personal information provided by visitors to a web site. This is done without the knowledge and consent of the user and often without the knowledge of the developers of the web site that was visited.

Mr. Inlander emphasized the importance of confidentiality in all aspects of health care and gave stunning examples of how information about our personal lives is unwittingly shared with others in normal everyday interactions with medical staff in hospitals, clinics, and doctors offices. He said that most of us would be shocked to know how often information about our personal health is shared with others without our knowledge and that we are often not careful enough about protecting our privacy.

Healthnet staff prepared a select list of web sites dealing with privacy issues to distribute to program attendees. A [copy of this webliography](#) is included with this issue of the newsletter.

NETNEWS

CONNECTICUT PHYSICIAN PROFILES



Most of you now know that the **Connecticut Department of Public Health** provides profiles of all Connecticut physicians on their web site at <http://www.state.ct.us/dph/>. The information contained in these reports includes the education and training of the physician, awards and honors, specialties, malpractice claims, and disciplinary actions taken against the physician. Most current and potential patients are keenly interested in the malpractice information as well as the disciplinary actions. Although the malpractice information may not be as complete as we'd like, the information on the disciplinary action cited can be supplemented by looking at the **Department of Health's Regulatory Action Reports**. These reports are separate from the Profile database and can also be accessed from the Department of Public Health's homepage.

For example, if you look at the profile for Dr. Jonathan Greenfield, item X under Connecticut Licensure Disciplinary Action states that he had had a prior disciplinary action taken against him on 7/18/2000. However, it doesn't state why this disciplinary action was taken. To find more specific information, you need to look at the Regulatory Action Reports. It helps to have the date of the action (which is usually included in the Profile) because the Reports are issued quarterly and there isn't a cumulation of past reports. In the case of Dr. Greenfield, the date given in his profile is 7/18/2000 so you would select the quarterly report for July 1, 2000 to September 30, 2000.

Once you bring up the report, find the page listing "Physicians". Scroll through this section to find Dr. Greenfield. The information for Dr. Greenfield shows that the type of case was sexual misconduct and that he was assessed a \$5,000 civil penalty, placed on a four year probation with therapy, and that a psychiatric evaluation was ordered.

STUDY WARNS OF LIMITATIONS OF HEALTH INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Over 97 million Americans used the Internet in the past year to search for health information, attempting to mine the tens of thousands of health-related Web sites for information they need regarding a personal medical concern. The information they can readily be linked to may include highly technical and scientific information on diseases and their treatments, advertisements for health care services, physicians, pharmaceuticals, advocacy organizations, private healthcare information companies, and government resources. Studies show that over 70% of consumers are using the information they find to influence their decisions about their medical care.

For a number of years there has been a concern about the reliability and the variation in quality of health information on the Internet. Recently, the California Healthcare Foundation commissioned a study by the Rand Corporation to evaluate English and Spanish health information on the Internet. The study looked at the performance of 10 search engines to locate specific information on four health topics – breast cancer, obesity, childhood asthma, and depression. Evaluators then looked at the quality and accuracy of the information retrieved by each of the search engines. Standardized concepts were developed to assess the quality of the information in each of the four topics. The evaluators also measured the readability of the information found by the search engines.

In summary, the study found that:

- Search engines are not efficient tools for locating health information on a particular topic. Only 1 in 5 searches lead to relevant information and no search engine is clearly better than another;
- Consumers often find incomplete answers to important health questions; however the information that is provided is generally accurate. Reviewers found, though, that about 53 per cent of the sites evaluated contradicted other information on the same site.
- A substantial proportion of the health information found on the Internet is promotional – the site sells products or services and this is not always readily apparent to the consumer;
- Most web-based health information is difficult for the average consumer to understand. Half of the English language materials found were written at the college level and all were at least a tenth grade reading level. Forty percent of the Spanish language materials were written at the college level, and almost all were written at a ninth-grade reading level.

The study concludes with recommendations to consumers using the Internet for health information, to consumer advocacy organizations, to health care providers, and to Internet information providers. Consumers are cautioned to set aside an adequate amount of time for a search and to plan to visit several sites. Also, consumers need to be aware that although search engines provide the prospect of quick access to information, they are only moderately efficient at identifying content relevant to a specific search. Consumers need to understand that most sites will not provide a comprehensive picture of what they need to know and can only supplement consultation with a health care professional. Web sites, however, may provide enough information to help the consumer ask good questions and understand better what their doctor tells them.

A complete copy of the study is available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/documents/interneteval>.

PUBMED ADDS NEW FEATURE FOR ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE JOURNALS

Recognizing the need to provide authoritative information on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), the **National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)** and the **National Library of Medicine (NLM)**, two components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have partnered to launch a new CAM subset of a larger medical literature database that will provide free, web-based, access to CAM sources of information.

"CAM on PubMed" is a new subset or part of PubMed, which is a free system offered by NLM that provides an easy way to access over 11 million citations and abstracts in the MEDLINE database and additional life science journals. MEDLINE currently covers nearly 4,500 journals published in the United States and more than 70 other countries.

The "CAM on PubMed" subset currently contains over 220,000 citations (records) of journal articles related to CAM research. As the field of research in complementary and alternative medicine grows and more articles are published in peer-reviewed journals, the service will greatly expand.

You can search "CAM on PubMed" from the NCCAM site (<http://nccam.nih.gov/>) or directly through PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>). When searching from the NCCAM web site, your searches will be automatically limited to CAM-related citations. If you search directly from PubMed, you need to limit your search to the CAM subset. First click on the "Limits" button. Next, select "Complementary Medicine" on the Subsets pull down menu (on the right side of the "Limits" page. Your search will be limited to complementary and alternative medicine citations.

INFORMATION ABOUT CHEMOTHERAPY FROM THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

The **CancerNet** site of the **National Cancer Institute** recently debuted on online edition of their publication "Chemotherapy and you: a guide to self-help during cancer treatment". The booklet is for patients who are receiving chemotherapy for cancer. It describes what patients can expect during chemotherapy and offers guidance on things patients can do to help themselves during and after treatment. Knowing how to help oneself can give a person more control in treatment decisions.

The booklet discusses what to expect during chemotherapy, eating well during chemotherapy, coping with chemotherapy's side effects, complementary therapies, getting needed support, and paying for chemotherapy. The complete text of the booklet is available at http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov/peb/chemo_you/

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



The following books are recommended for consumer health collections. These books are not part of the UCHC Library collection.

American Cancer Society's guide to complementary and alternative cancer methods. American Cancer Society, 2000. 438 p. (ISBN 0-944235-24-7), \$24.95.

Each year the American public spends over \$34 million on alternative and complementary medical therapies. A large percentage of the public's use of these methods is focused on reducing one's risk for developing cancer, improving one's quality of life while undergoing treatment for cancer, and as a better treatment option and possible cure for cancer.

This encyclopedic guide from the authority on cancer, the American Cancer Society (ACS), is aimed at helping the public, the consumer, the patient, and family members better understand these methods of therapy and recognize the issues that accompany them. The ACS believes that all cancer interventions must withstand the scrutiny of scientific evaluation before they can be recommended for the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of cancer.

The entries are grouped into 5 separate categories of methods: mind, body, and spirit; manual healing and physical touch; herbs, vitamins, and minerals; diet and nutrition therapies; and pharmacological and biological treatment methods. Each entry for a therapy provides important information, including the proponent's claims for the therapy, what the method involves, historical background of the method, recent research findings supporting or refuting the efficacy of the method, and side effects and complications. Specific therapies to be covered were determined by a review of literature available to the public, including books, Internet web sites, and popular magazines and newspapers. This allowed the authors to gain insight into what methods were being marketed to the public. Each method was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed using peer-reviewed medical journal articles and textbooks to determine if the claims for the therapy could be supported by scientific evidence.

Separate sections offer a general description of complementary and alternative methods and how to evaluate each therapy, a discussion of how to know what is safe, and guidelines for using CAM for cancer management. A highly recommended guide for consumer health reference collections.

Consumer Reports Complete Guide to Health Services for Seniors. Trudy Lieberman and the editors of Consumer Reports. Three Rivers Press, 2000. 568 p. (ISBN 0-8129-3147-5), \$19.95 pap.

As Americans live longer, the need to make provisions for compassionate, quality long-term care for parents and other older relatives becomes more urgent. Continuing in its tradition of conveying practical, evaluative information to the consumer, Consumer Reports magazine has published a comprehensive, extremely helpful guide to health services for older Americans. The book is subtitled "What your family needs to know about finding and financing Medicare, Assisted Living, Nursing Homes, Home Care, Adult Day Care." Much of the information is based on ongoing Consumer Report projects and surveys. The author visited many long-term care facilities as part of her research for this book.

The author's efforts were directed to providing coordination of a fragmented national system of elderly health services. The challenges of financing health care services for the elderly, gaining admission to a nursing home, and paying for long-term care are explained in understandable language within a clearly laid out format. Tables and worksheets include "A Comparison Of Home Care Costs," and "A Sample Contract for Private-Duty Nursing Assistance."

The appendixes, which comprise a third of the book, focus on such useful topics as descriptions and limitations of state and company pharmaceutical assistance programs, ratings of Medicare-supplement insurance policies, ratings of Medicare HMOs, state-funded programs for the elderly, and a state-by-state nursing home watch list. The ratings systems were created by the authors.

In addition to practical advice, this very helpful, recommended guide provides support for caregivers and strategies for negotiating the intricacies of the health care system. (JK)

PDR for nutritional supplements. Sheldon Saul Hendler and David Rorvik, eds. Medical Economics, 2001. 575 p. (ISBN 1-56363-364-7), \$59.59.

If you're one of the 3 out of 4 Americans who use nutritional supplements on a regular basis, you definitely need this reference book. Nowhere is there a more complete, convenient, evidence based reference book that offers over 200 monographs covering nearly 1,000 nutritional products. These range from the exotic, such as shark cartilage and royal jelly, to the more mundane B vitamins. Other supplements covered include amino acids and oligopeptides, fatty acids and other lipids, hormonal products, metabolites and cofactors, plant chemicals such as phytosterols and phytostanols, and probiotics such as acidophilus.

The format of this comprehensive reference is similar to another popular Medical Economics Press book, the **PDR for Herbal Medicine**. Each monograph gives a complete description of the supplement including the most widely distributed trade names, a description of the nature of the substance, actions and pharmacology, indications and usage contraindications and adverse reactions, interactions, and dosage and administration. Each description is accompanied by references to the medical and scientific literature on the supplement. Monographs are indexed by supplement name, trade names, nutritional category, indications, side effects, adjunctive uses, and manufacturers.

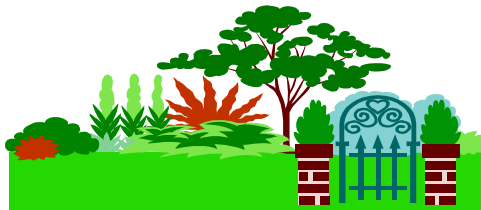
Editors Hendler (PhD in biochemistry and molecular biology and the editor of Journal of Medicinal Food), and Rorvik (science and medicine writer for Time magazine) have brought together a wealth of information for both the consumer and the health professional. Highly recommended for consumer health reference collections.

Raising Resilient Children. Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein. Contemporary Books, 2001. 317 p. (ISBN 0-8092-9764-7), \$22.95.

Written by two experienced child psychologists, this book presents a supportive, positive approach to childrearing in today's competitive, stressful world. It is a compassionate, practical guide to raising confident, self-assured children, capable of solving problems that arise in school, family, and among friends. The book focuses on realistically raising children's self-esteem by discovering and reinforcing their strengths and helping them make independent decisions and positive choices.

The book expands on ten, specific guideposts that promote long-term, effective communication and independence. Among the guideposts for effective parenting are, "Nurture islands of competence." "Mistakes are teachable moments." "Teach and convey empathy." Implementation of these ten strategies is illustrated with many anecdotes from the authors' family and professional experiences. Dr. Brooks and Dr. Goldstein encourage parents to have confidence that their words and actions make a real difference to their children, even when their youngsters appear indifferent or act hostile.

A seventy minute companion video to the book is available. Based on the strategies presented in the book, a television documentary, following the experiences of several families and including interviews with parents, children, psychologists, and educators, will be broadcast nationally in the fall of 2001. Additional guidance for parents can be found at the authors' website <http://www.raisingresilientkids.com/>. (JK)



*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle with the assistance of Judith Kronick.
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
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